

---

Honors Projects and Presentations: Undergraduate

---

5-2010

## The Dazzling Grotesque: Spectacle, Popular Culture, and Contemporary Art

Lindsay Mehringer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Permanent URL: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors/122>

---

### Recommended Citation

Mehringer, Lindsay, "The Dazzling Grotesque: Spectacle, Popular Culture, and Contemporary Art" (2010).  
*Honors Projects and Presentations: Undergraduate*. 122.  
<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors/122>

### Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.

# The Dazzling Grotesque: Spectacle, Popular Culture, and Contemporary Art

Lindsay Mehringer

Messiah College, Grantham, PA

Department of Visual Arts Honors Thesis

Professor Brenton Good

May 2010

## *Table of Contents*

Introduction	1
<i>Categorizations</i>	
Theatrical Spectacle	2
Material Spectacle	6
Phenomenological Spectacle	11
<i>Context</i>	
Installation	15
<i>Spectrums</i>	
Avant-Garde—Kitsch	23
Pleasure—Bliss	28
Commercial—Complimentary	31
Conclusion	34
Endnotes	36
Images	40
Bibliography	47

## *Introduction*

Spectacle lives a double life, straddling both the realms of academia and entertainment, both a subject of critical theory and mass-mediated culture. It is simultaneously dissected by scholarly writing and applied by critics and layperson alike to aesthetically stimulating films, musicals, and the lights of Vegas. Generically, spectacle is understood as an impressive visual presentation, grand in scale, and is often associated with either the theater or circus.<sup>1</sup> In popular culture, the word spectacle is frequently used to describe the media phenomena of professional sports, television productions, blockbuster movies, musical concerts, etc. This term's widespread application makes it flexible yet culturally entrenched, and therefore challenging to define concisely.

Just as Caspar David Friedrich presented his paintings by candlelight to emphasize their moods and manipulate the response of the viewers,<sup>2</sup> all spectacles rely on a contrived experience. As it relates to art, the term "spectacle" is a multi-faceted concept, shaped by a range of critical theories and expressed through a variety of media. For this discussion, spectacle will be distilled down to three basic categories: theatrical, material, and phenomenological. Particular emphasis will be placed on contemporary installation art as a means of conveying spectacle. The framework of this discussion will be constructed using historical binaries transformed into spectrums, including, but not limited to, the avant-garde and kitsch, bliss and pleasure, as well as commercial and complimentary [figure 1].



## *Categorizations*

### THEATRICAL SPECTACLE

Hal Foster has described contemporary art as operating within a “condition of spectacle.”<sup>3</sup> This statement implies that the question is not whether a work of art is spectacular, but rather ‘how’ or ‘how much.’ Within the realm of visual art, spectacle is not restricted to a single, simple classification. Three delineations can be applied: theatrical, material, and phenomenological. Theatrical is perhaps the most recognizable category because of its close relationship to the roots of spectacle. Although they vary in spectacular measure, one rarely hesitates to classify a staged performance or a film as an example of spectacle. The spectacular nature of an artwork is demonstrated by its aesthetic and experiential qualities. This is exemplified in the differences between a community college’s production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Cirque de Soleil’s “O” at Las Vegas’ Bellagio Casino. The first is low budget, the spectator observes the event, and it relies on the historical integrity of the play’s content. The latter is expensively produced, the performers and set engage more directly with the audience, and it aims to provide sensory stimulus. Performance and body art can also be grouped under this same “theatrical” umbrella because of the debt they owe to traditional theater. For example, Yoko Ono’s 1964 *Cut Piece*, in which audience members were invited onto the stage where Ono was seated in order to cut off portions of her garments, relies on the cultural precedent of the stage as a space allocated for performance. Furthermore, performing this piece on a stage, like placing a sculpture in a gallery, helped to elevate *Cut Piece* to the status of art.

The mass popularity of film makes it a very accessible medium. However, some critics, like Liz Kotz, express concerns that some contemporary video art is too appealing and has neglected its performance art foundation and historical reputation for social criticism by “submitting to the dictates of spectacle culture,” in both content and presentation.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Claire Bishop discusses video art’s propensity to exist in limbo between thought-provoking art and mind-numbing entertainment since “contemporary artists are as smitten with the cinematic object as they are critical of it.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly Foster asserts that so much contemporary art attempts to produce an enthralling experience that converts the exciting and impressive products of media culture to a work of art. He says, “In this art we get the rush of special effects along with the surplus value of the aesthetic.”<sup>6</sup> However, to video art’s credit, it allows the artist to break down the divisions between art object, performance piece, and general entertainment through degrees of accessibility or manipulation into obscurity. Film has the ability to exhibit the eye-catching, high quality, production value of the blockbuster or purposefully have the low quality and low budget appearance of a documentary. Also, film can be widely distributed to the general public through the sale of copies, or viewings can be restricted to art venues.

Matthew Barney creates elaborate films and sculpture driven by a complex and mysterious narrative framework. He draws from the expressive costumes and antics of historical stage, erotic, and cinema performances as well as contemporary forms of entertainment, such as professional sports and the rock concert. In a profile of Barney, Calvin Tomkins explains the vast array of influences and content in Barney’s work, including the use of “autobiographical material, science, architecture, private fantasies,

classical myths, elaborate costumes, and prosthetic devices to create worlds that are unlike any you'll see at the multiplex.”<sup>7</sup> Tomkins also describes the personal history that has informed Barney's works, like his high school quarterback and modeling days, his time at Yale, and his ongoing interest in human biology and overcoming purposefully imposed physical boundaries.<sup>8</sup> In the legacy of Salvador Dali and Luis Buñel's collaborative film *Un Chien Andalou* [of the eye-slicing fame], Barney's surreal sense of artistry layers obscure symbolism, seemingly unrelated content, and combines the aesthetically dazzling and grotesque, resulting in something both engrossing and unsettling. Matthew Barney is best known for his multifaceted and extensive *Cremaster Cycle*, comprised of five films and related sculpture, produced over the course of eight years, from 1994 until 2002 [2]. The term cremaster refers to the muscle in the male body that responds to external temperature changes or muscle movement by adjusting the proximity of the testicles to the body. More importantly, the films are thematically concerned with the time in utero, during which the human body resists but ultimately determines its physical gender, also termed sexual differentiation.<sup>9</sup> Although he is best known as a filmmaker, Barney qualifies his work as sculpture, and sees the films as a means to present sculptures.<sup>10</sup>

Barney's work is so aesthetically and dramatically enthralling that one can forget its greater narrative or question what separates it from the realm of cinema. In fact, Foster describes Barney as embracing spectacle as his ‘medium.’<sup>11</sup> Even Tomkins, who seems enamored of Barney, raises the question, “is it art at all, or just pretentiously gorgeous nonsense?”<sup>12</sup> Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward compare the two sphere's of *Cremaster's* heritage: the institutionally challenging, ethereal, and physically strenuous

performance art of the 1960s and 1970s, by artists like Chris Burden, Carolee Schneemann, and Vito Acconci, and the conventional, highly commercialized, movie star idolizing, action-filled, Hollywood blockbuster. Ultimately, they conclude that Barney's productions, with their "*Die Hard*-like stunts" and "hard body" hero, high costs, and limited edition merchandise, are more spectacular than political.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps in an effort to offset high production costs, a partial version of *Cremaster 3* [3] was released on DVD in 2003, removing the film from the gallery or museum and underscoring its paradoxical exclusivity and accessibility. In the tradition of installation, the DVD version is experiential, allowing the viewer to select different levels of the Guggenheim from a control panel, heightening the sense of spectacle as the viewer not only sees and hears but also exerts control over the course of events. Although this interactivity contradicts Barney's usually meticulous control over his work, it engages the viewer's attention, resulting in a dynamic sense of performance and theatricality for all parties.

Among artists who have recognized film as an important vehicle of theatrical spectacle and visual communication, Doug Aitken applies film in manner that has both the interactivity of an art installation and the high production quality of popular media. Aitken's films are primarily projected on walls, buildings, or freestanding screens that divide a space, direct the viewer, and disrupt the linear narrative. Liz Kotz comments that the monumental scale of the projection with its "carefully staged and mawkish 'cinematic' tableau" is "strategically suspended between the high culture aspirations of painting and the pop-culture appeal of Hollywood."<sup>14</sup> As the viewer walks amongst the various projections he or she, as Kotz describes, is dwarfed by their scales and affected by their emotional intensity in a manner equivalent to standing before a Rothko or

watching a popular film in a commercial movie theater.<sup>15</sup> In some sense, at least visually, the gallery floor becomes a stage, but unlike traditional theater or cinema, viewers walk amongst the performers, thereby activating their artistic involvement.

In Aitken's *Electric Earth* a lone protagonist moves frenetically through a series of deserted spaces while occasional verbal narration and haunting electronic sounds coordinate with the commonplace yet post-apocalyptic images of empty nighttime scenes [4]. In an *ArtForum* article about *Electric Earth*, Aitken describes the disorienting effect of motion on the senses and compares it to the unceasing dispersion of information in today's culture. This constant motion destabilizes the autonomy of artistic media and genres thereby forcing the interdisciplinary upon the artist. In response, Aitken tries to "work with the language of images and the tools that are available to him, and strive to carve some kind of personal perception out of this endless flow of information called experience."<sup>16</sup> Although the electronically powered environment consumes and dictates the actions of the protagonist in *Electric Earth*, Aitkens attempts to humanize the rapid-fire pace of life.<sup>17</sup> The viewer's ability to freely experience the installation space separates him or her from the manipulated gestures of the protagonist. Like Barney's DVD, Aitken's projections allow the viewer to choose how to interact with the work. This activation of the spectator's role is also crucial to the phenomenological spectacle, which relies on viewer perception.

## MATERIAL SPECTACLE

The second category, material spectacle, involves the use of known, tangible materials. This practice depends largely on the precedent set by Marcel Duchamp's

“Fountain” and other readymades, which, according to Keller and Ward, took “humble commodities out of their context of use and put them into the museum, without obviating their potential utility.”<sup>18</sup> Like theatrical and phenomenological spectacle, contemporary expressions of material spectacle are often experiential installations. Many installation artists, like Tara Donovan, disguise the usefulness of the readymade by presenting it in staggering quantities that take on the appearance of something other. Benjamin Buchloh refers to this mass repetition of objects grouped according to likeness as stemming from but unlike the readymade. Also, in its singularity the readymade is relational and even sculptural but in mass it is an object of consumption.<sup>19</sup> Foster and Buchloh comment that while the readymade was once used to critique the artistic institution, contemporary artists “returned the readymade to its status as a product—indeed, they often transformed it into a luxury commodity on display.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, these massive groupings of objects have to involve modes of presentation practiced by both the department store and museum.<sup>21</sup> The return of the readymade to its nature as merchandise strongly impacts the manner of display, viewer interaction, and meaning of the objects used by the artist.

One embodiment of material spectacle is the work of British artist Damien Hirst, whose *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* [5] pursued and gained incredible media, critical, and art market attention, even attaining a pop-culture status of recognizability.<sup>22</sup> Its massive tiger shark, suspended in formaldehyde and encased in glass, is confrontationally postured, provoking the viewer’s anxieties about mortality and confusing his or her conceptions of art. There is a historical foundation for art, like Hirst’s, whose work attempts to blur the lines between disciplines, within and between art and medicine, science, or economics. The 1960s and 1970s non-sites of

Robert Smithson sought to “turn the real into a representation of itself” by presenting actual, natural objects in manmade containers within the context of the museum and gallery.<sup>23</sup> Like Smithson’s non-sites, Hirst’s various formaldehyde preserved animals use the real object instead of a depiction, but by removing it from its original context, renders it aesthetic. Additionally Smithson and Hirst create work informed by the museum’s authority, as culturally or scientifically accredited establishments. However, while Smithson used the museum’s authority in order to criticize, Buchloh and Foster argue that work like Hirst’s fails to issue any institutional critique and instead “reinforces the fetishization of the high-cultural object even more.”<sup>24</sup>

Damien Hirst’s artwork has a propensity for blending the sterile minimal nature of museum presentation, the morbidity of the morgue or slaughterhouse, and the excesses of material wealth. Hirst’s *Thousand Years* [6], involves a rotting bovine head, maggots, flies, and an insect electrocutor within a pristine glass-walled case that failed to contain the stench of decay. With regards to interaction, Hirst’s presentation, with its large vitrines, excludes the viewer physically, reflecting the perfectly placed, preserved, and labeled authority of the museum object, yet the ability of this work to induce a visceral response pushes it from institutional critique to spectacle. This shock-factor is further increased by the price tag attached and the celebrity status of its creator. Don Thompson explains that the record-breaking sale of Hirst’s *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* involved enough famous art personalities and media attention to create a situation in which the asking price swelled to twelve million dollars, inducing a media frenzy that further solidified Hirst’s fame and the desirability his work.<sup>25</sup> Thompson also describes Hirst and others, including Jeff Koons and Andy Warhol, as

having “achieved the status of recognized and respected brands” because of the fashion-driven desirability of their work.<sup>26</sup> Hirst has even said, “Becoming a brand name is an important part of life. It’s the world we live in.”<sup>27</sup> The shocking content and cost of Hirst’s work, as well as his cheeky personality, have become important aspects of its continual success and spectacular status.

Not all material spectacle is so blatantly extravagant, shocking, or publicized as that of Damien Hirst. While Hirst’s work is concerned with the suspension of naturally occurring events, Gonzalez-Torres allows his objects to remain active and unpreserved. Whether it is a pile of foil-wrapped candies mounded in a corner, a stack of pale-blue paper on the floor, or a faceted plastic beaded curtain, Felix Gonzalez-Torres allows the objects to retain their functions. Therefore, the readymade quality of the objects in Gonzalez-Torres’ work remains more intact than the assembled and contained items of a Damien Hirst. Additionally, Gonzalez-Torres allows the viewers to apply their preexisting understanding of the objects to their interaction with the work. His ‘candy spills’, involving hundreds of pounds of foil-wrapped candies piled on the floor [7], and his paper ‘stacks’ [8] of plain or printed papers, are freely available to the viewer to not only touch but to take, thereby depleting the mass of the work and fulfilling the intention of the artist. Furthermore, in an interview with Tim Rollins, Gonzalez-Torres explains his dependence on the viewer to actively participate in the work and he describes himself as a “theater director who is trying to convey some ideas by reinterpreting the notion of the division of roles.”<sup>28</sup> By mimicking the accessibility of consumer culture, these cooperative and participatory efforts help to activate the spectacular in the artwork while redefining the rules of the artistic institution. However, consumption is not the only



driving force and Gonzalez-Torres sees this work as an exercise in openhandedness and as a method of rehearsing his worst fear and reality, that of his partner Ross Laycock being taken by AIDS. For example, the mass of the candies in *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)* [7] corresponds to the weight of Gonzalez-Torres' partner, and just as the pile depletes, Ross wastes away.

According to Gonzalez-Torres, "aesthetics are politics" that affect the academic and pop-culture lover alike.<sup>29</sup> His minimal and conceptual art intentionally operates within historically authoritative aesthetics, including Minimalism and Postminimalism, which he "contaminates with something social."<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the infinite reproducibility and tactility of Gonzalez-Torres' work functionally reference consumer culture but seek to subvert the artistic establishment's notions of the stability of the art object, ownership, and viewer decorum. Thus, the legacy of the readymade's critical voice is maintained. All the while, this work maintains an emotional undercurrent of deeply human emotions such as loss. Foster comments on this paradox of consumption and generosity by saying that the candy spills have "a spirit of offering so different from the cool cynicism of other uses of the readymade device by Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, and others."<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Gonzalez-Torres gives the museum and viewer equal authority to elevate the value of his familiar objects. For example, at the Guggenheim's installation of his *Untitled (Golden)* [9] paired with Roni Horn's *Forms From the Gold Field*, viewers touch and pass freely through the beaded curtain. Resultantly, the artificial gold curtain becomes just as precious as Horn's sheet of pure gold that lies vulnerably in the space behind. This simple curtain is utterly transformed from a cheap room divider into something valuable.

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL SPECTACLE

Phenomenological spectacle is the third and final category. It can be defined as a viewer activated experience involving a manipulated perception of naturally occurring events. There is an art historical precedent for the phenomenological. Claire Bishop explains that the Minimalist and Postminimalist conceptions of phenomena valued an immediacy of experience that was without history, culture, or self. However, poststructuralists refuted the neutrality of perception by emphasizing the culturally and socially influenced self. Likewise, contemporary expressions of phenomena seek to address and incorporate the self's perceptions and history.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the participation and personhood of the viewer is so crucial to this equation that Olafur Eliasson refers to his work as "a self-portrait of the spectator."<sup>33</sup> Other critics, however, like James Meyer, defend the phenomenological efforts of 1960s work, by the likes of Robert Morris and Richard Serra, who worked in relation to human scale. Meyer expresses grave concerns that contemporary installations are too concerned with achieving a large size that "exceeds our perceptual understanding" and that is based on serving a cultural demand for complicated and visually engaging creations on "an epic scale." According to Meyers, these grand forms "rephrase the perceptual encounter as drama and spectacle" that is so enticing that it persuades contemporary museums to expand their facilities in order to accommodate huge artworks that attract an equally large audience.<sup>34</sup> Foster, who shares this opinion, holds frequent art fairs and biennials responsible for artificially increasing the demand for incredibly large-scaled work.<sup>35</sup> With regards to content, much phenomenological artwork uses the gallery, created object, or altered landmass as vehicles or tools for understanding a greater natural occurrence. For example, James

Turrell's 'skyspaces' and *Roden Crater* uses the room's ceiling or crater's earthen tunnels to direct and focus viewer attention on the vast sky or cosmological event. These practices perpetuate the human process of isolating segments of nature in order to understand their inner workings and relationship to humankind.

The exploratory quality of science appeals strongly to Olafur Eliasson and when interviewed, he describes his Berlin studio of thirty specialists and workers as a little spaceship or laboratory that runs extensive experiments.<sup>36</sup> The prolific production of Eliasson's 'laboratory' is a spectacle in and of itself. His work is concerned with the manner in which science and technology mediates human perceptions of natural phenomena. However, the installations that result from these scientific inquiries aim not to be sterile but offer the viewer sensory delight.<sup>37</sup> The obsessive quality, incredible expense, and usually overwhelming scale of Eliasson's work places it within the scope of spectacle. On occasion, as in *Multiple Shadow House* [10], consisting of a series of scrim-paneled rooms onto which the viewer's shadow is cast in a chromatic scale, Eliasson exhibits the cheap impressiveness of a children's science museum or the entertainment factor of special effects. Its passivity even strays into the territory of Roland Barthes' description of the "inoccupation of bodies" at a popular cinema.<sup>38</sup> Although one cannot walk home with a room of colored light in his or her hand, as with a sheet of paper from a Gonzalez-Torres, Eliasson's work is widely exhibited and receives incredible public commissions, like *The New York City Waterfalls* [11]. However, Eliasson attempts to resist the economic aspects of spectacle and believes that the art market should not "commodify our senses using the same manipulative techniques as elsewhere."<sup>39</sup>

*The New York City Waterfalls* were four man-made, roughly one hundred foot tall, waterfalls installed at various locations within the New York Harbor from June through October of 2008. This fifteen million dollar project was produced in cooperation with the Public Art Fund and The City of New York and support from countless organizations. The monumentally sized *Waterfalls* exemplify the accessibility of spectacle as well as mimic naturally occurring phenomena. The relationship between scale and public artwork was not addressed by Meyers or Foster, but contributes to contemporary art's ever increasing size. Constructed from exposed scaffolding, which not only relate to the city's constant architectural changes,<sup>40</sup> the structure mediates the experience of the waterfalls by revealing the source. Eliasson aimed to direct the public's attention to their man-made and natural surroundings and "evoke experiences that are both individual and enhance a sense of collectivity."<sup>41</sup> As much as Eliasson hoped to enhance awareness of environmental concerns, the *Waterfalls* were a tourist attraction complete with boat tours, bike routes, and children's activities.<sup>42</sup> Holland Cotter says of the artist: "he is at his best as a producer of public gestures; impermanent, immersive theatrical situations. When he is in this mode, he starts to move beyond being an institutional entertainer, or he becomes at least a resistant one."<sup>43</sup> *The New York City Waterfalls* achieved Eliasson's goal of providing a collective experience but in a manner more akin to visiting the Statue of Liberty than of changing cultural or perceptual paradigms.

The artwork of Indian born, British artist Anish Kapoor uses physically compelling sculpture and installation as a means of conveying indescribable phenomena. In fact, he refers to his work as "representational abstractions about the unformed."<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, when Kapoor qualifies his work according to whether it is “truly made”, he is not referring to craft but the point at which the tactile and intangible meet.<sup>45</sup> The presence of materials, including brightly colored pure pigments, massive quantities of red wax, stone, mirrored and raw steel, and the physical spaces, the dark recesses, or space-distorting mirrors, of Kapoor’s sculptures, serve as vehicles for conveying his primary interest, the void. Homi K. Bhabha explains that a physical form can more aptly convey vacancy than nothing at all and describes the void as emptiness that in its expansion destroys perception, placing the viewer in a transitional existence suspended in time.<sup>46</sup> While Eliasson uses science to describe phenomena, Anish Kapoor uses time, and refers to it as “the mystical truth of art.” Kapoor ascribes to a romantic notion of the interconnectivity of scale and time in a manner comparable to the sublime, and manifest in viewer awe.<sup>47</sup>

While Kapoor claims to follow Barnett Newman’s model that “scale is not a matter of size, it is a matter of content,” Kapoor has a propensity for operating on a grand scale.<sup>48</sup> Included in Meyer’s critique of Eliasson are similar concerns aimed at Kapoor about human scale being sacrificed for incomprehensible size and its spectacular result.<sup>49</sup> This conflict of interests and Kapoor’s fascination with the relationship between time and the void is demonstrated by Kapoor’s *Memory* [12], installed at the New York Guggenheim in the spring of 2010. The viewer is afforded three perspectives of the orb-shaped gargantuan steel form, but none that reveal its entirety, causing the viewer to envision the whole of the form through recollection. One viewpoint even looks into the huge, dark belly of the sculpture. Ken Johnson asserts that the relationship between the steel edifice and its seemingly boundless interior is like the one between “our finite

bodies and unfathomable minds.” He describes the form’s egg and breast-like shape as evoking female fertility and he finishes his review with the following witty statement: “what Mr. Kapoor has produced is a womb with a view.”<sup>50</sup> However, the militaryesque size and the pieced and bolted construction of the rusted steel form evoke visions of submarines or bombs rather than wombs. Overall, the sculpture seems too grounded in temporal struggles than immaterial realms. The huge scale of the structure fails to serve as conduit for experiencing the void and becomes a construction that dwarfs the viewer for the sake of impressiveness. In a review of a London-based exhibition of Kapoor’s work, John Haldane expresses his disappointment in the disconnect between Kapoor’s pursuit of the sublime and the viewer’s impression of the work as merely “visual stunts.”<sup>51</sup> While the artist’s philosophies are challenging and compelling there are occasions in which the physical form, because of its scale or otherwise, is not capable of transporting the viewer to that space suspended in time.

### *Context*

#### INSTALLATION

In the context of this discussion, installation is crucial to contemporary art’s expression of spectacle. Amongst the abundance of literature that describes the framework and nature of contemporary installation art, Claire Bishop skillfully synthesizes the various historical, cultural, functional, theoretical, etc., components of installation. She explains that it arose in the 1960s and 1970s as a rebuttal to the mass media’s affect on culture and the commoditization of art.<sup>52</sup> Bishop goes on to describe that the contradictory aims of historical and contemporary installation are to ‘activate’

and ‘decenter’ the viewer’s subjectivity. Installation demands that the viewer be fully engaged, only to have that stability disrupted by the work itself.<sup>53</sup> According to the Bishop, this is what sets installation apart from popular entertainment, which leaves the spectator physically and mentally passive. Installation allows the viewer to have an unmediated and therefore ‘true’ experience, unlike the ‘false’ engagement had by the illusions of painting or television.<sup>54</sup> Bishop is altogether optimistic about the ability of installation to shape the viewer in positive ways, as evidenced in her closing thoughts:

It is possible to say that installation art’s insistence on the viewer’s experience aims to thrust into question our sense of stability in and mastery over the world, and to reveal the ‘true’ nature of our subjectivity as fragmented and decentered. By attempting to expose us to the ‘reality’ of our condition as decentered subjects without closure, installation art implies that we may become adequate to this model and thereby more equipped to negotiate our actions in the world and with other people.<sup>55</sup>

Other authors, such as Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius, express that the decentering effect of mediums like installation, collage, assemblage, and performance art, underscores the reality that all human experience is fragmentary. These art forms allow the viewer to take part in the process of establishing meaning, the fractured nature of which is reflective of the greater cultural experience. Installation’s ability to refer to and give form to art and popular culture “serves as a powerful metaphor of how the phenomenon of visual culture is always already constituted as disjunctive within society.”<sup>56</sup> This definition does not assign hierarchal values within the arts, rather, it reveals the interconnectedness of all aspects of culture and discusses the ability of installation to embody human experience. Decentering the viewer or reader is further established by a variety of sources that have fed the contemporary understanding of installation and viewer experience. These include Rosalind Krauss’ expanded definition

of sculpture and the role of the index as well as the authority given to viewers by Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author" and Nicolas Bourriaud's "Relational Aesthetics."

Having observed that the boundaries between artistic media were breaking down, as seen in land art, Rosalind Krauss wrote "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." She also determined that the historical definition of sculpture was no longer sufficient to properly discuss three-dimensional artwork.<sup>57</sup> Because of the interdisciplinary nature of art over the past few decades it is a challenging feat to concisely categorize almost any artwork and Krauss's model of classifying art using an expanded, inclusive definition has become especially applicable. For example, Olafur Eliasson's work is executed in a manner that reveals its equal heritage in art and science and Matthew Barney's 'sculpture' is grounded in popular cinema, performance art, and installation. Krauss holds the perspective that neither the traditional definition of sculpture as a monument, nor the negative condition of modern sculpture, being neither landscape nor architecture, is sufficient to discuss contemporary artwork.<sup>58</sup> From this expanded definition emerges an abundance of mediums that are not restricted to separate sectors but intermingle freely. In the contemporary sphere it is not uncommon to see artists, like Janine Antoni, Ann Hamilton, or Oliver Herring, who integrate many mediums, including video, drawing, painting, photography, and performance art, while involving seemingly unrelated subjects such as literature, science, religion, hospitality, and popular media. As a result, the terminologies and histories of all of these mediums and subjects may enter the discussion of single piece of artwork. The blending between disciplines and media allows artwork to borrow from intellectual and popular sources alike and, as in installation, merges the roles of artist and curator.<sup>59</sup> This plurality of definition, expression, and execution has



undoubtedly affected the contemporary understanding of spectacle. As fields weave in and out of one another, or as the definition of art expands, the differences between art as high culture politics and spectacle as pop-culture entertainment can blur. The light-hearted, experiential, tactile, and aesthetic nature, as well as references to AIDS, homosexuality, and human relationships, in the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres illustrates this shift.

In the essay “Notes on the Index pt. 1 and pt. 2” Krauss explores the relationship of the index to artwork that does not conform to historical precedents. From the understanding of its linguistic roots, the category of “index” includes pronouns, which act as “shifters”, and that, like shadows, depend on their relationships to their referents in order to have meaning.<sup>60</sup> Additionally because the index is not symbolic it is not bound to the historical conditions of language. The index, unlike a symbol, is direct, it is the thing itself, and is therefore already understood in its materiality.<sup>61</sup> The paper in a Felix Gonzalez-Torres ‘stack’ is just that, a stack of paper that the viewer is free to touch or take. In the legacy of Marcel Duchamp’s readymades, his alter ego Rrose Sélavy, and even Man Ray’s Rayographs, the use of the index has remained a crucial aspect of artistic expression.<sup>62</sup> The readymade can be reproduced, and because it so directly depicts its original subject, its selection as an art object requires written explanation. Similarly, contemporary artistic practices include the production of works of art, including performance, conceptual, relational, and installation art, which are uncoded by traditional art principles, thereby requiring textual or verbal explanation of their art statuses. For example, Hirst’s rotting cow’s head is not coded for an art exhibition so much as the slaughterhouse, making a written explanation helpful for the viewer.

As Krauss explains, these “uncoded” messages relate to Roland Barthes’ description of the photograph as something that documents its subject, rather than transform by encoding. In other words, the photograph allows its subject to remain as it is and does not rely on culturally bound and assigned symbols or descriptions. Likewise, the photograph is a direct representation of its subject, the message of which “is no longer drawn from an institutional reserve.” Barthes asserts that unlike language, “the connective tissue binding the objects contained by the photograph [or the contents of the installation] is that of the world itself, rather than a cultural system.”<sup>63</sup> This is clearly demonstrated by phenomenological installations like, Olafur Eliasson’s *Multiple Shadow House*, which depend on universal human perception instead of culturally dictated symbolic imagery. Sometimes, however, the photograph or installation functions as the code, as in art forms that require documentation, such as earth, video, and body art. Matthew Barney’s films can also be seen in this way, as a record of sculpture, and, conversely, his installations and other tangible sculpture serve as a record of his films.

As emphasized, the viewer’s voluntary and active participation becomes crucial to the success of an installation, namely its aim to decenter the viewer. Roland Barthes’ “Death of the Author” is fundamental in defining the role of the viewer in relationship to the author [artist] and the work itself. Modernist philosophies appoint the author [artist] as the outstanding authority over the ultimate content and meaning of his or her work, thereby relegating the text and the reader to lesser statuses. Barthes reconstructs this paradigm entirely and suggests that in order for writing to even commence the author must die.<sup>64</sup> Barthes compares the relationship of the author to his or her text to that of parents who bear and “nourish” their child, but ultimately realize their child is a separate

being entirely.<sup>65</sup> He goes on to explain that the value of the text is not in its source, the author, but rather in the fact that the text finds itself in the hands of the reader. The reader is essentially a neutral body because it does not share the history of the author, and as such is able to interact freely with text.<sup>66</sup> Unhindered by the presence of the artist/author, the reader/viewer is able to participate in the installation, contributing to the work and determining his or her own meaning. This is not to say that authorship has been completely removed from the discussion of any particular installation or spectacular artwork, but rather that the viewer's role has become a matter of great importance instead of a secondary or tertiary concern. This even applies to Doug Aitken's *Electric Earth*, in which the viewer's ability to walk amongst the projections, choosing how long to focus on any one screen, activates the impact of the scale of the projected film which then also decenters the viewer's preconceived notions of cinema or narrative.

Relational aesthetics is a movement that has been profoundly affected by the 'death of the author.' Nicolas Bourriaud, author of the seminal essay that defined this genre, describes it as a theory based on human relationships and social structures rather than a system of exclusive symbolism.<sup>67</sup> In his opinion, contemporary art should not just be seen but fully experienced in a communal and democratic manner creating a "state of encounter." Bourriaud also applies the Marxist term "interstice", meaning an unconventional social relationship, to the interaction between the viewer and art.<sup>68</sup> The focus here is in not just creating artwork but also redefining human interaction, communication, and the relationships between the artist and viewer as well as between viewers. Like the 'happenings' from the 1960s, the divisions between participants, artists, and materials attempt to be non-existent. Relational aesthetics seeks to decenter the

pacifying effect of the “society of the spectacle”, or ‘a social relationship between people, mediated by images’, by creating new forms of human relationships.<sup>69</sup> One might say that relational aesthetics attempts to produce genuine, unmediated human relationships. It is a politically charged movement that aims to create democratic dialogue amongst viewers instead of an artist’s monologue.<sup>70</sup> Bourriaud proceeds to describe these works as mini-utopias in which the artist actually nourishes or serves the viewer.<sup>71</sup> Instead of an ultimate utopian ideal meant to transform all of society, this work attempts to create its own small ideal scenario. Furthermore, many of the artists that Bourriaud discusses utilize installation because of its interactivity and uncoded nature, allowing them engage freely with their viewers through their work. Rikrit Tiravanija is an example of an artist redefining his and the viewers’ roles, by creating viewer-nourishing utopias. He presents human interaction as art by building installations that transform the gallery into a public space and that demonstrate the interconnectedness of the human needs for sustenance, shelter, and relationships.<sup>72</sup> In *Untitled (Still)* Tiravanija interacted with gallery visitors by cooking and serving Thai food.<sup>73</sup> Claire Bishop also describes the ability of these utopian installations to appeal to a variety of audiences, who become a crucial part of the work and with whom the artist interacts in very down to earth manner.<sup>74</sup>

In his essay “Chat Rooms”, Hal Foster discusses the response of contemporary artists to the legacy of the readymade, collaboration’s affect on authorship, institutional critique, the art market, etc., as manifest in large-scale, experiential installations. Most relevant to this discussion, is Foster’s reservations about huge, market driven installations and relational aesthetics. He criticizes the idealistically optimistic attitudes of artists who attempt to transform art into a social, democratic dialogue that is bizarrely free of

conflict. He even quotes Bourriaud as saying, “ ‘The society of the spectacle [relationships mediated by images] is thus followed by the society of extras, where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy in more or less truncated channels of communication.’ ”<sup>75</sup> It would seem that relational aesthetics and experiential artwork is merely one of many lacking modes of communication that result from and perpetuate Debord’s opinion that spectacle provides an illusion of social unity but actually destroys relationships.<sup>76</sup> Foster’s observations also include the difficulties behind categorizing artwork because of the expansion and interdisciplinary manifestations of artistic media and the shifting role of the artist. Foster explains that through exhibition as a medium, as in installation, the artist must retain his or her identity while also acting as a personal curator. The artist/curator directs an interactive extravaganza that too often becomes messy than communicative, places too much responsibility in the hands of the viewer, and makes collaboration and participation the end instead of the means.<sup>77</sup> Although, as Barthes describes, the reader has been born, the reader is not always able to fully engage with the work. The vague relationship between the large size of Anish Kapoor’s *Memory* and its subject matter illustrates this too often found disconnect between the work and the ability of the viewer to perceive the conceptual subject of the work. Additionally, in her discussion of *Tiravanija*, Bishop expresses that although the artist aims to establish a public space in which to repair human interaction, visitors come from a homogeneous group of people who already share an interest in art and that most arrive feeling that they are too late or missed the true event, the opening.<sup>78</sup> Foster reveals the inherent challenges and weaknesses of large-scale, experiential artwork, suggesting that size and interactivity

are not always crucial to the work so much as a response to the demand for the impressive or spectacular.

### *Spectrums*

AVANT-GARDE ↔ KITSCH

In a 1969 lecture entitled “Avant-Garde Attitudes,” Clement Greenberg describes the interdisciplinary nature and proliferation of styles within art as an intentional “state of confusion.”<sup>79</sup> He portrays it as an explosion within artistic media in which the boundaries between the arts and everything else were being destroyed, including the divisions between high and popular culture. Like Krauss, he saw “painting turn into sculpture, sculpture into architecture, engineering, theater, environment, ‘participation’” and the development of a reciprocal relationship between technology and the arts.<sup>80</sup> Beneficial or not, this has remained the state of contemporary art since Greenberg’s lecture. As for the source, Greenberg points to the dissolution of academic art and the resulting inability of the avant-garde to direct or define itself.<sup>81</sup>

Greenberg’s 1939 essay “The Avant-Garde and Kitsch” remains the benchmark for defining those terms within the United States. There were avant-garde movements within Europe that predate his article, but Greenberg’s perspective relates most strongly to the issues at hand. The essay places the avant-garde and kitsch in a hierarchal relationship of the former above the latter. According to Greenberg, the only similarity between the two is that they are a product of the same culture. Greenberg explains that historically, when challenged, artists repeated the themes of the Masters and therefore produced nothing original. However, the avant-garde reaches beyond academicism to a

new frontier.<sup>82</sup> In his 1969 lecture, Greenberg claims that the avant-garde is not a break with the past, but an ethic of maintaining the sense of quality and innovative efforts of the Masters.<sup>83</sup> The avant-garde's innovations are made possible by a "superior consciousness of history" and "advanced intellect" and it creates something inherently authentic.<sup>84</sup> If the avant-garde reaches ahead, kitsch follows and instead of being a product of highly developed intelligence it stems from the homogenizing effect of industrialization and urbanization. It is popular, commercial, entertaining, and, in Greenberg's terms, made of a "debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture."<sup>85</sup> In other words, in kitsch's mimesis of high culture, all nuances have been predigested and deceptively packaged for mass-consumption.

Although a student of Greenberg, Rosalind Krauss offers a sharp rebuttal to his concept of the avant-garde and focuses her critique on the modernist definition of originality. Krauss explains that the avant-garde artist deems his or her work original simply because he or she is inherently unique.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the ideal artwork is a direct product of the artist's hand and exists in a singular, pristine state. Krauss then questions what happens to a work of art that is reproduced. Does it cease to be original simply because it exists in multiples and has been created apart from the artist?<sup>87</sup> Ultimately, Krauss asserts that repetition and originality are not polar opposites but coexist.<sup>88</sup> Meaning, the mere production of copies or the practice of revisiting a historical theme does not necessarily negate the potential for originality. For example, unlike the modernist avant-garde, who denied the value of repetition, postmodern artists embrace it fully. In fact, their work is focused on copying, reproducing, and borrowing from every possible source instead of seeking the uniquely new. Krauss states, "In deconstructing the

sister notions of origin and originality, postmodernism establishes a schism between itself and the conceptual domain of the avant-garde.”<sup>89</sup>

Krauss’s final statement contends that the notions of avant-garde or originality no longer even apply to the pursuits of postmodern art. However, the term has not been removed from artistic discourse. Rather, ‘avant-garde’ is used to describe work that has the appearance of newness or that breaks from conservative culture, through shock or otherwise. Additionally, this application acknowledges and includes the practice of repetition. In “Avant-Garde Attitudes” Greenberg discusses this significant shift from progress-oriented to shock-driven innovation. He indicates that art is under the impression that it needs to draw attention to newness through the “startling and spectacular.”<sup>90</sup> In Greenberg’s opinion, shock does not constitute innovation and he goes on to say the following: “The character itself of being startling, spectacular, or upsetting has become conventionalized, part of safe good taste.”<sup>91</sup> Greenberg reveals something very important to this discussion, that the controversial has become culturally acceptable.

Similarly, Hal Foster comments that the consumer-culture-like repetition of images within Andy Warhol’s work both desensitizes the viewer to the shock of a traumatic image, like a car crash, and produces that distress.<sup>92</sup> Shock is not a means of resolving trauma so much as its use. It may provoke anguish amongst viewers but it is also expected, if not demanded by culture. The plethora of gut and nerve-wrenching films released at Halloween are a clear example of this. Their unsettling content and high ticket sales are not an indication of innovation or culture-challenging concepts but rather genre consistency and popularity. Specifically in relation to movies, Foster observes that experience in contemporary society is so often mediated by technology. As a result, the



viewer's emotional response has adjusted to and even relies on "technological shocks."<sup>93</sup> Newness existing in the appearance of shock has transformed the present-day understanding of the avant-garde. What may seem to be or call itself the avant-garde, the political, or the progressive, is equally kitsch. In a discussion with Yve-Alain Bois, Hal Foster hypothesizes that contemporary artists no longer believe in the debate between the avant-garde and kitsch and have therefore accepted a condition of spectacle. Bois affirmatively responds by saying that both "resistant high art" and "mass-cultural trash" are coexistent and that "resistance is immediately dissolved in the new situation."<sup>94</sup> In other terms, the struggle to change or define culture now takes the form of shock. It therefore appears that kitsch and the avant-garde are interrelated terms that operate along a spectrum. Likewise, art can exhibit degrees of both.

This redefined relationship between kitsch and the avant-garde, and the avant-garde as shock is demonstrated by the work of Damien Hirst. Julian Stallabrass points out that although Hirst's trays of surgical instruments, blood-splattered rooms, animal parts, drugs, etc. are not traditionally associated with the gallery [can be seen as "new"], rather, they exist primarily in products of the media like horror movies [kitsch].<sup>95</sup> Hirst is interested in a contrived discomfort similar to the mediated emotional response to a film. In a series of interviews with Gordon Burn, Hirst openly admits to understanding the difference between the image, or representation, and reality. He believes the image is thrilling and says, "it's in every film, every TV program, blood everywhere and people getting killed. And it's not real... I like drama... but it's the cheap end of my shot...I can still find a place for a punch in the face, a slap, and a bang."<sup>96</sup> As this statement indicates, even when Hirst tries to convey deeper content, it aims to assault or shock the viewer.

Shock runs deep in every aspect of the work because Hirst perceives it as a historical method. He explains that all artists draw the viewer in through one belief system then bombard them with something entirely different. Likewise, Hirst discusses his public image and the mode of his work as a process of “raising and lowering expectations” for the sake of surprise, or “theater.”<sup>97</sup> Hirst’s heady titles like, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, *An Unreasonable Fear of Death and Dying*, and *The History of Pain*, imply a sense emotional gravity and existential content. Perhaps the work even seeks to reach into the psyche of the viewer and confront him or her with the transience of his or her existence. Stallabrass says in response: “Does the shark [*Physical Impossibility of Death*] really get us to think about mortality—who’s really afraid of sharks rather than of cancer or being run over? —Or does it simply remind us of *Jaws*?”<sup>98</sup> Stallabrass aims to classify Hirst’s work amongst popular culture’s kitsch, yet Hirst admits to intentionally suspending his work between illusion and the actual fear of dying.<sup>99</sup>

Another appropriation of the “avant-garde” is Nicolas Bourriaud’s essay “Relational Aesthetics.” To Bourriaud, relational aesthetics is a movement that has moved past the visual and distilled art to relationships. Bourriaud acknowledges the relational art of the 1960s but criticizes its internally directed focus and pursuit of the new. He explains, “Modernism...cheerfully dishonored the past in the name of the future.”<sup>100</sup> However, even Greenberg did not describe the avant-garde or modernism in that manner but, rather, as sustaining the innovative continuity of the Masters.<sup>101</sup> In comparison, according to Bourriaud, contemporary art addresses external, cultural relationships.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, relational aesthetics claims the heritage of the avant-garde

yet rejects its “dogmatism” and progress-ethic.<sup>103</sup> Bourriaud explains that contemporary art “no longer tries to make progress thanks to conflict and clashes, but by discovering new assemblages, possible relations between distinct units, and by building alliances between different partners.”<sup>104</sup> While the idea of “progress” remains important, it would seem that practitioners of relational aesthetics cheerfully align themselves with the culture-changing practices of the avant-garde yet do so selectively.

## PLEASURE ↔ BLISS

Like Greenberg, Roland Barthes also observed a shift in language and art in which historical disciplines fractured and converged.<sup>105</sup> The result is a new object that Barthes terms the “text.”<sup>106</sup> The text exists in the expression of language, is experienced actively, and is composed of “associations, contiguity, and cross-references.”<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, this description’s relational emphasis resembles Bourriaud’s conception of relational aesthetics. More importantly, the text is not isolated from a connection to other texts or its readers. Instead, the text offers an infinite number of meanings that rely on reader collaboration instead of the author’s authority.<sup>108</sup> Work on, the other hand, is the opposite of the text. The work is the actual tangible product of the author’s, or artist’s, labors.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, one might equate the aesthetic qualities of artwork with Barthes’ definition of work and the experiential qualities of art with text. Furthermore, the life of the text mirrors the decentering effects and importance of viewer participation in installation and relational aesthetics.

The definitions of work and text are also important to Barthes’ conception of “pleasure” and “bliss.” The text can assume either of these two modes but Barthes applies

pleasure, like work, in a derogatory manner.<sup>110</sup> According to Barthes, the text of pleasure “contents, fills, grants euphoria... comes from culture and does not break with it, and is linked to a comfortable practice of reading [or viewing].”<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, only pleasure, not bliss, exists in the culture of the masses.<sup>112</sup> These descriptions are similar to Greenberg’s definition of kitsch<sup>113</sup> and relate to the passivity of mass-mediated, spectacular entertainment like television, movies, or sporting events.<sup>114</sup> In addition, pleasure, like kitsch, lacks permanence yet is pursued because it produces, though partial, enjoyment.<sup>115</sup> While pleasure is passive, like a state of being, bliss is active. Bliss mirrors the decentering qualities of installation art and relational aesthetics, genres that pursue the text of the art over its work. Likewise, according to Barthes, the text of bliss “imposes a state of loss... discomforts, unsettles the reader’s [viewer’s] historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, and bring to a crisis his relation with language.”<sup>116</sup> Like viewer-centered art born from the ‘death of the author,’ bliss is had when the writer seeks the reader and the text proves that it desires the reader.<sup>117</sup> While pleasure can be expressed easily, words cannot even convey a sense of bliss.<sup>118</sup> Interestingly, Barthes identifies bliss with the arrival of the new that “disrupts consciousness,” exists in radical culture’s utopian ideas, and pushes the limits of what can be known.<sup>119</sup> This description strongly resembles Greenberg’s qualification of the new as a value that scorns repetition<sup>120</sup> and the avant-garde’s pursuit of culture-transcending innovations. In keeping with the structure of this discussion, bliss and pleasure also exist along a spectrum and artwork can therefore exhibit degrees of both qualities.

For example, Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* reflects the relationship between pleasure and bliss. According to Barthes, the discomfort of bliss sometimes includes a tedious prattling that leads to boredom.<sup>121</sup> Prattling involves a long-winded and nonsensical explanation of something. Interestingly, Keller and Ward explain that the avant-garde film is often defined by having an exhaustingly long duration [it prattles]. They cite Andy Warhol's eight-hour long, single shot of the Empire State Building and his five hour film *Sleep*. Length is the film equivalent of the physical strain of performance art. Finally Keller and Ward discuss Barney's *Cremaster 3*, with its three hour running time, and they way it "spectacularizes the avant-garde performance."<sup>122</sup> While Barney's film meets the length requirement for blissful boredom, its content, complete with stunts and violence characteristic of Hollywood, lacks the raw bodily stresses of performance art.<sup>123</sup> Although *Cremaster 3* is fluent in the pleasurable complacency of popular culture's kitsch, it does not completely lack the unease associated with the avant-garde's pursuit of bliss.

Barney's production value and stunts smack of commercialization, but the props, characters, and content reach beyond even the obscurity of the little known horror film. Norman Mailer, who played Harry Houdini in *Cremaster 2* remarks, "Barney does things that no one has ever done in movies... there's an intensity of perception, and visceral experience you have... which is extraordinary."<sup>124</sup> Mailer's description is in keeping with the passivity-disrupting qualities of the avant-garde, installation, and even bliss. The *Cremaster Cycle* is a surreal and unusual combination of artistic and film genres, fantastic and realistic subject matter, and one outstandingly unique narrative framework. Barney's damp, gelatinous, self-lubricating, and sometimes fleshy props elicit a gut

response of unease. His various *Cremaster* characters, including a “dandified, red-haired satyr in a white suit,” androgynous bodybuilder “fairies,”<sup>125</sup> a cheetah-woman played by the double amputee Aimee Mullins, the Rocky Mountains, the Chrysler Building, Richard Serra, Masons, Chorus girls dressed as lambs, racecar drivers, etc., could not be more diverse. Finally, the underlying subject matter, sexual nondifferentiation, or an “organism’s struggle to resist that fateful moment of sexual definition,”<sup>126</sup> is a phenomena that does not fit within the thematic material of most popular films. Additionally the uncanny, often wordless narrative and out of order sequence of the films unsettle the viewer’s anticipation of a typical linear plot.

#### COMMERCIAL $\longleftrightarrow$ COMPLIMENTARY

Spectacle and money have always been closely related. Consider the incredible media hype surrounding movies that break box-office records, like *Titanic* or *Avatar*. The art community is not exempt from this excitement. In fact, as Don Thompson describes, auction houses and highbrow galleries circulate information to foster buyer and public interest then thrive on the spectacle of the impressive fiscal exchanges that result.<sup>127</sup> Thompson illustrates this enthusiasm with an account of an auction in which the sale of Mark Rothko’s *White Center (Yellow, Pink, and Lavender on Rose)* for \$71.7 million was followed by applause. In response, Thompson asks, “What was being celebrated?”, “The buyers oil wealth?”, “His aesthetic taste?” or the fact that a new record was set?<sup>128</sup> The monetary value of art strongly affects the viewer’s perception of its overall worth and importance. It also makes for a point of reference, conversation topic, or bit of entertainment. Jerry Saltz comments with regards to the commercialized art institution,

“...everyone says the [art] market is ‘about quality,’ but the market merely assigns value, fetishizes desire, charts hits, and creates ambience.”<sup>129</sup> He asserts that the market itself operates in the manner of spectacle.

Some artists try to escape or subvert the economic spectacle, some embrace it, and others blend both opposition to and acceptance of the fiscal aspect of art culture. This economic factor can be discussed as commercial or complimentary. Caleb Larsen’s *A Tool to Deceive and Slaughter* consists of a small black cube connected via Ethernet to Ebay, where it continually auctions itself. If it sells the purchaser is required to plug in the Ethernet, thereby creating a new auction and placing it in “eternal transactional flux.”<sup>130</sup> Larsen’s self-auctioning box comments on the commoditization of art, namely the treatment of art as objects of fiscal rather than cultural value. While Larsen’s self-auctioning box is primarily commercial, the performances and artwork of James Lee Byars are complimentary, here meaning free of charge. Byars literally offers his work as gifts to people and museums alike.<sup>131</sup> *The Perfect Smile*, consisting of the artist dressed in black offering a brief and subtle smile, was performed and thereafter donated to Cologne’s Museum Ludwig becoming the first performance piece in the museum’s collection.<sup>132</sup>

Damien Hirst embraces the commercial aspect of art, and critics, like Jerry Saltz, have accused him of becoming a brand like Prada or Gucci.<sup>133</sup> Hirst, however, is unfazed by this accusation and he considers becoming a brand an important part of living in this society.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, with regards to the making and selling of his work, Hirst’s attitude is manifest in statements like, “If you make great fucking art...they’ll buy what you fucking give them. If you’re great, they’ll buy it.”<sup>135</sup> Hirst’s aggressive approach and

intentionally placed high price tags augment his shocking artwork. For example, this bold business model was actualized in Hirst's 2008 Sotheby's auction, in which he risked disaster by overstepping his dealers and taking his work directly to auction. The result, however, was an astonishing \$200.7 million in sales.<sup>136</sup> Hirst straddles the entertainment values of both a B-grade horror movie and the spectacle of excessive expenditures of wealth.

Like Hirst, Felix Gonzalez-Torres has received his share of media attention, fiscally impressive sales, and major exhibitions, including being the second artist to posthumously represent the United States in the 2007 Venice Biennale. However, with regards to his philosophical formation, Gonzalez-Torres references the concerns of Marxist authors, like Guy Debord,<sup>137</sup> who anticipated a "society of the spectacle" in which the image is commoditized and relationships dissolved into a representation.<sup>138</sup> It would seem that Gonzalez-Torres intends to retain the human factor within his artwork. At the same time, he also wants his work to participate in the art market instead of alternative channels. Rather than rebelling, he sees himself as spy embedded in the system itself because, as he explains, "it's more threatening that people like me are operating as part of the market—selling the work, especially when you consider that... this is just a stack of paper that I didn't even touch."<sup>139</sup> For example, Torres' candy spills combine emotional and political subject matter with minimal compositions, transgress the established physical distance between art and viewer, and yet are sold with a certificate of authenticity to validate their art statuses.<sup>140</sup> The accumulation of these factors creates a paradox that places the work between being a complimentary gift and commercial art object. By participating in the spectacles of the consumerist art market, seemingly



harmless and familiar objects become vehicles for bridging divisions within the public by retaining their innate material interest, adopting the cultural status of art, and advocating for human causes.

### *Conclusion*

These categories, contextual information, and spectrums attempt to provide a structure for a foundational understanding of the behavior of spectacle in contemporary art. They also endeavor to rephrase and reapply existing terminology and theories for the sake of providing a fresh perspective. This discussion promotes a shift in discourse in which ‘spectacle’ is not only applied to products of popular culture but also to art. Just as Foster has suggested<sup>141</sup>, it appears fair to contend that present-day society operates within a condition of spectacle, the influence of which has permeated art. As history has demonstrated, just as disciplines have merged into one another, the divisions between high and low culture have broken down. This shift results [to borrow from Barthes] in a new text in which spectacle is inherent. In other terms, spectacle exists in all contemporary artwork, but in degree.

There are a variety of possible reactions to the ubiquitous presence of spectacle. They include despair, immersion, and application. The first response believes that by exhibiting spectacle, art has lost its critical voice. This reaction is accompanied by disdain for the lack of boundaries between artistic disciplines and therefore promotes the modernist ethic of applying strict hierarchies and binaries, including a clean-cut division between spectacle, or mass culture, and art. It may even adopt the ethic of the avant-garde and reject the activities of popular culture, while pursuing the new. Another course of

action is to submit fully to spectacle's influence. The artwork that results from this reaction conforms to the passive and or impressive nature of entertainment and requires equally inactive viewers. Whether it is cheaply appealing or lavishly executed, this work is often materialistic and economically driven. Ultimately, this response is fully immersed in popular culture for the sake of mimesis instead of subversion.

The final outlook acknowledges the condition of spectacle by attempting to bridge extremes. This moderate perspective accepts the fluctuations of culture. It also attempts to utilize the suspension of boundaries between artistic disciplines. It does not, however, dissolve into spectacle but, rather, maintains art's veracity as a critical voice within culture. Just as Gonzalez-Torres conceived of his work, the art that results from this reaction embeds itself, like a spy, within the structures of art *and* popular culture in order to exert its influence. By donning a spectacular appearance, this art has greater ability to maneuver within and therefore shape a spectacle-driven culture. Ultimately these briefly described reactions fail to completely represent the vast scope of responses to spectacle. However, in conjunction with the greater discussion, these three perspectives aim to provoke a thoughtful and critical analysis of contemporary art's treatment of spectacle.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. "Spectacle," Def. 1, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spectacle> (accessed 30 March 2010).
- <sup>2</sup> James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 187.
- <sup>3</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin h. d. Buchloh, Hal Foster, and Rosalind Krauss, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 675.
- <sup>4</sup> Liz Kotz, "The Space Between Screens," in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, eds. Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 110.
- <sup>5</sup> Claire Bishop, ed., *Installation Art* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 96.
- <sup>6</sup> Bois et al., 676.
- <sup>7</sup> Calvin Tomkins, *The Lives of the Artists* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 116.
- <sup>8</sup> Tomkins, 119-123.
- <sup>9</sup> Tomkins, 117.
- <sup>10</sup> Tomkins, 116.
- <sup>11</sup> Bois et al., 675.
- <sup>12</sup> Tomkins, 119.
- <sup>13</sup> Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward, "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2006): 3-16, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877760> (accessed 7 March 2010).
- <sup>14</sup> Kotz, 105.
- <sup>15</sup> Kotz, 105.
- <sup>16</sup> Doug Aitken, "1000 Words: Doug Aitken talks about Electric Earth," *ArtForum* (May 2000), [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0268/is\\_9\\_38/ai\\_65649374/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_9_38/ai_65649374/) (accessed 5 March 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> Aitken.
- <sup>18</sup> Keller and Ward, 8.
- <sup>19</sup> Bois et al., 435.
- <sup>20</sup> Boil et al., 601.
- <sup>21</sup> Bois et al., 435, 438.
- <sup>22</sup> Don Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2.
- Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art* (London: Verso, 2006), 131-132.
- <sup>23</sup> Bois et al., 43.
- <sup>24</sup> Bois et al., 601.
- <sup>25</sup> Thompson, 2.
- <sup>26</sup> Thompson, 13.
- <sup>27</sup> Thompson, 61.
- <sup>28</sup> Tim Rollins, "Interview with Felix Gonzalez-Torres," *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*. ed. William S. Bartman (New York: A.R.T. Press, 1993), 13-23.
- <sup>29</sup> Robert Storr, "Felix-Gonzalez Torres: Etre un Espion," *Artpress* (1995): 24-32, <http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2000/Torres/torres/storr.html> (accessed 5 April 2010).
- <sup>30</sup> Rollins, 21.

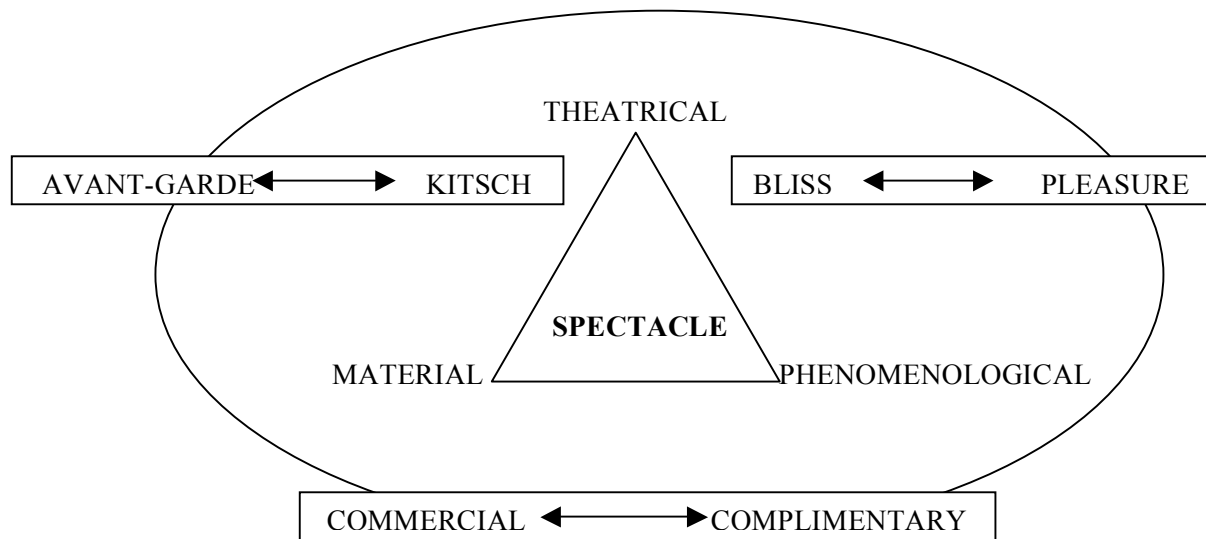
- 
- <sup>31</sup> Bois et al., 610.
- <sup>32</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 72-76.
- <sup>33</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 76.
- <sup>34</sup> James Meyer, "NO MORE SCALE: The Experience of Size in Contemporary Sculpture" *ArtForum* (Summer 2004): 2, <http://www.artforum.com/inprint/id=6960> (accessed 6 April 2010).
- <sup>35</sup> Hal Foster, "Chat Rooms," *Documents of Contemporary Art: Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 190-195.
- <sup>36</sup> Doug Aitken, Olafur Eliasson and Glenn D. Lowry, "The Spectacle of Contemporary Perception: Conversation with Doug Aitken, Olafur Eliasson and Glenn D. Lowry," (MoMA Think Modern Lectures, Museum of Modern Art, New York: 27 November 2006) [http://www.moma.org/visit/podcasts/feed\\_thinkmodern.xml](http://www.moma.org/visit/podcasts/feed_thinkmodern.xml) (accessed 6 April 2010).
- <sup>37</sup> Christa Steinle and Peter Weibel, "Editorial," *Olafur Eliasson: Surroundings Surrounded, Essays on Space and Science*, ed. Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 12-13.
- <sup>38</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 95.
- <sup>39</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 77.
- <sup>40</sup> Public Art Fund, "The New York City Waterfalls Brochure" (NY: Public Art Fund, 2008), 3, [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Brochure](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Brochure) (accessed 15 April 2010).
- <sup>41</sup> Public Art Fund, "New York City Waterfalls Press Release," (NY: Public Art Fund, 2008) [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Press\\_Release](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Press_Release).
- <sup>42</sup> Public Art Fund, "The New York City Waterfalls Activity Guide," (NY: Public Art Fund, 2008) [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Activity\\_Guide](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Activity_Guide).
- <sup>43</sup> Holland Cotter, "Stand Still; A Spectacle Will Happen" *The New York Times* (April 18, 2008):2, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/arts/design/18elia.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/arts/design/18elia.html?_r=1) (accessed 15 April 2010).
- <sup>44</sup> Thomas McEvelley, *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt* (New York: Allworth Press, 1999), 221.
- <sup>45</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "Anish Kapoor: The Making of Emptiness," *Anish Kapoor: Writing* <http://www.anishkapoor.com/writing/homibhabha.htm> (accessed 7 April 2010).
- <sup>46</sup> Bhabha.
- <sup>47</sup> Marcello Dantas, "A Conversation between curator Marcelo Dantas and Anish Kapoor." *Anish Kapoor: Writing*, <http://www.anishkapoor.com/writing/brazilinterview.htm> (accessed 7 April 2010).
- <sup>48</sup> Dantas.
- <sup>49</sup> Meyer, 2.
- <sup>50</sup> Ken Johnson, "Inside, Outside, All Around the Thing" *New York Times* (October 22, 2009) <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/arts/design/23kapoor.html> (accessed 25 April 2010).
- <sup>51</sup> John Haldane, "Review of Anish Kapoor: London," *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 140, No. 1144 (1998): 494. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/887965> (accessed 6 April 2010).
- <sup>52</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 130.
- <sup>53</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 131.
- <sup>54</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 80.

- 
- <sup>55</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 133
- <sup>56</sup> Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius, "The Spectacle of Visual Culture," *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2004): 298-299, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1321066> (accessed 1 April 2010).
- <sup>57</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).
- <sup>58</sup> Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 34.
- <sup>59</sup> Foster, "Chat Rooms," 191-192.
- <sup>60</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index, pt 1," 197.
- <sup>61</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index, pt 1," 198.
- <sup>62</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index, pt 1," 198-199, 203.
- <sup>63</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index, pt 2," 211.
- <sup>64</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Documents of Contemporary Art: Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 41.
- <sup>65</sup> Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 43.
- <sup>66</sup> Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 44.
- <sup>67</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, "Relational Aesthetics," *Documents of Contemporary Art: Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 160.
- <sup>68</sup> Bourriaud, 160-161.
- <sup>69</sup> Bourriaud, 168.
- <sup>70</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 119.
- <sup>71</sup> Bourriaud, 163, 166.
- <sup>72</sup> Bourriaud, 164.
- <sup>73</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 118-119.
- <sup>74</sup> Nicolas De Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, and Michael Petry, *Installation Art in the New Millenium: The Empire of the Senses* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 107.
- <sup>75</sup> Foster, 194-195.
- <sup>76</sup> Guy-Ernest Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 1967 (Black&Red translation 1977): statements 10,12, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm> (accessed 5 April 2010).
- <sup>77</sup> Foster, 192, 194.
- <sup>78</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 119.
- <sup>79</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties" (The John Power Lecture in Contemporary Art, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia: 17 May 1968) <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/avantgarde.html> (accessed 17 April 2010).
- <sup>80</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties."
- <sup>81</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties."
- <sup>82</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" *Partisan Review* (1939) <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/kitsch.html> (accessed 21 November 2009).
- <sup>83</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties."
- <sup>84</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch."
- <sup>85</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch."
- <sup>86</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 160.
- <sup>87</sup> Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 151-156.
- <sup>88</sup> Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 159, 160.

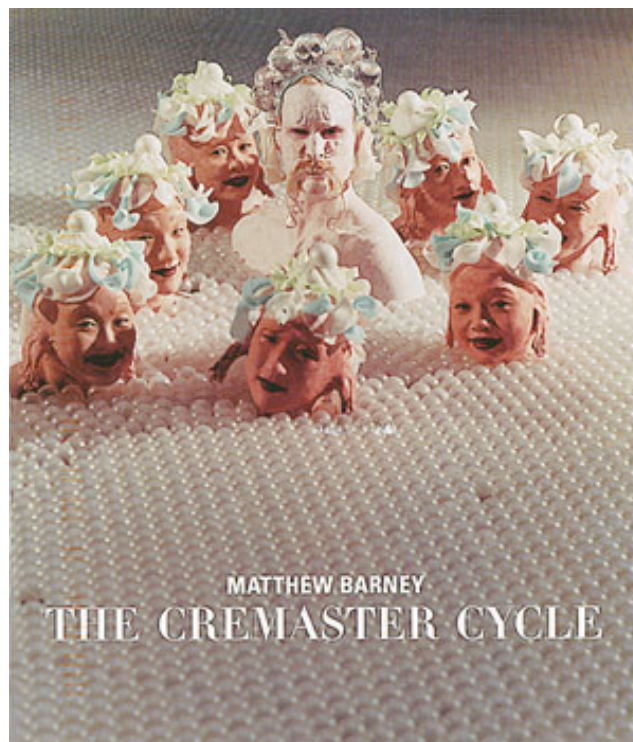
- 
- <sup>89</sup> Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 170.
- <sup>90</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties."
- <sup>91</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties."
- <sup>92</sup> Bois et al., 490.
- <sup>93</sup> Bois et al., 658.
- <sup>94</sup> Bois et al., 675.
- <sup>95</sup> Stallabrass, 25-26.
- <sup>96</sup> Gordon Burn and Damien Hirst, *On the Way to Work* (New York: UNIVERSE PUBLISHING, 2002) 216-217.
- <sup>97</sup> Hirst and Burn, 148.
- <sup>98</sup> Stallabras, 25-26.
- <sup>99</sup> Hirst and Burn, 180-181.
- <sup>100</sup> Bourriaud, 166.
- <sup>101</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes."
- <sup>102</sup> Bourriaud, 163.
- <sup>103</sup> Bourriaud, 166.
- <sup>104</sup> Bourriaud, 166.
- <sup>105</sup> Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy J. Hale (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 236.
- <sup>106</sup> Barthes, "From Work to Text," 236.
- <sup>107</sup> Barthes, "From Work to Text," 237-238.
- <sup>108</sup> Barthes, "From Work to Text," 238-240.
- <sup>109</sup> Barthes, "From Work to Text," 237, 239-240.
- <sup>110</sup> Barthes, "From Work to Text," 240.
- <sup>111</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text" trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 14.
- <sup>112</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 37.
- <sup>113</sup> Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch."
- <sup>114</sup> Bishop, *Installation Art*, 80.
- <sup>115</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 18.
- <sup>116</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 45.
- <sup>117</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 4-6.
- <sup>118</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 21.
- <sup>119</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 40, 37.
- <sup>120</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 41.
- <sup>121</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pleasure of the Text," 27, 45.
- <sup>122</sup> Keller and Ward, 6.
- <sup>123</sup> Keller and Ward, 6-7.
- <sup>124</sup> Tomkins, 133.
- <sup>125</sup> Tomkins, 130-131.
- <sup>126</sup> Tomkins, 117.
- <sup>127</sup> Thompson, 26, 39.
- <sup>128</sup> Thompson, 178.
- <sup>129</sup> Thompson, 232.

- 
- <sup>130</sup> Caleb Larsen, "Caleb Larsen: A Tool to Deceive and Slaughter," <http://www.caleblarsen.com/projects/a-tool-to-deceive-and-slaughter/#3> (accessed 20 April 2010).
- <sup>131</sup> Daniel A. Siedell, *God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008) 97.
- <sup>132</sup> Harald Fricke, "Magician of Quietude," 2004, [http://www.atisma.com/spiritart/Byars\\_Fricke.htm](http://www.atisma.com/spiritart/Byars_Fricke.htm) (accessed 20 April 2010).
- <sup>133</sup> Thompson, 66.
- <sup>134</sup> Thompson, 61.
- <sup>135</sup> Hirst and Burn, 105.
- <sup>136</sup> Carol Vogel, "Bull Market for Hirst in Sotheby's 2-Day Sale," *New York Times*, September 16, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/17/arts/design/17auct.html?scp=3&sq=damien%20hirst%20sotheby%27s&st=cse> (accessed 20 April 2010).
- <sup>137</sup> Rollins, 17.
- <sup>138</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.
- <sup>139</sup> Rollins, 20.
- <sup>140</sup> Rollins, 20.
- <sup>141</sup> Bois et al., 675.

*Images*



**Figure 1** Structural Model of Spectacle



**Figure 2** Matthew Barney *Cremaster Cycle*, 1994-2002  
(<http://fashionindie.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/cremastercycle.jpg>)

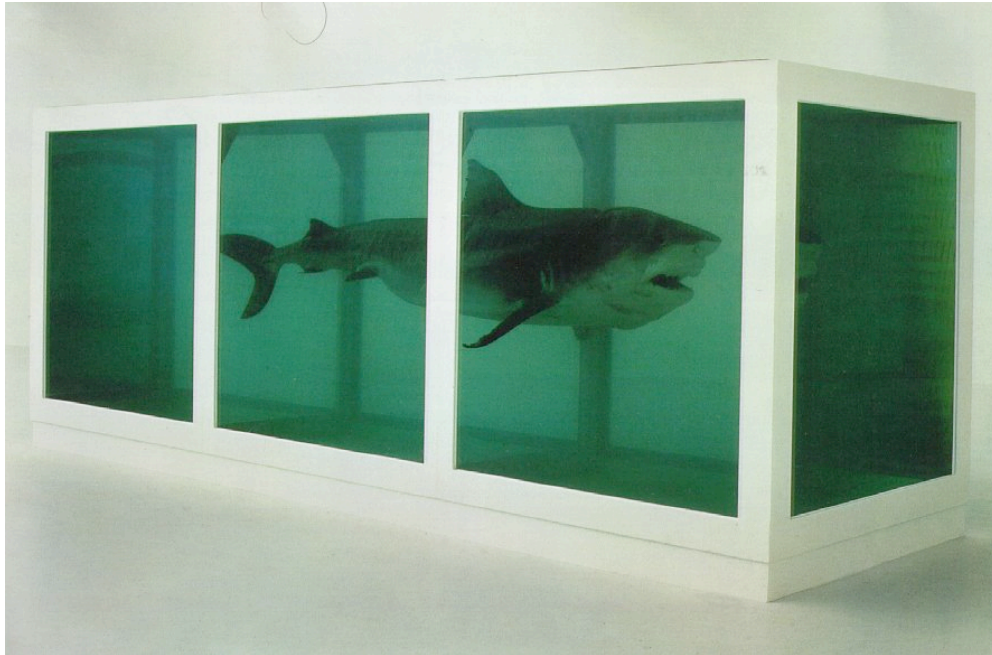




**Figure 3** Matthew Barney, *Cremaster 3*, 2002  
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fimoculous/215712068/sizes/l/>)



**Figure 4** Doug Aitken, *Electric Earth*, 1999, installation view at Whitney Museum of Art, NY  
(<http://www.whitney.org/Collection/DougAitken/2000145>)



**Figure 5** Damien Hirst, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991  
(<http://www.artchive.com/viewer/z.html>)



**Figure 6** Damien Hirst, *Thousand Years*, 1990  
(ARTstor)





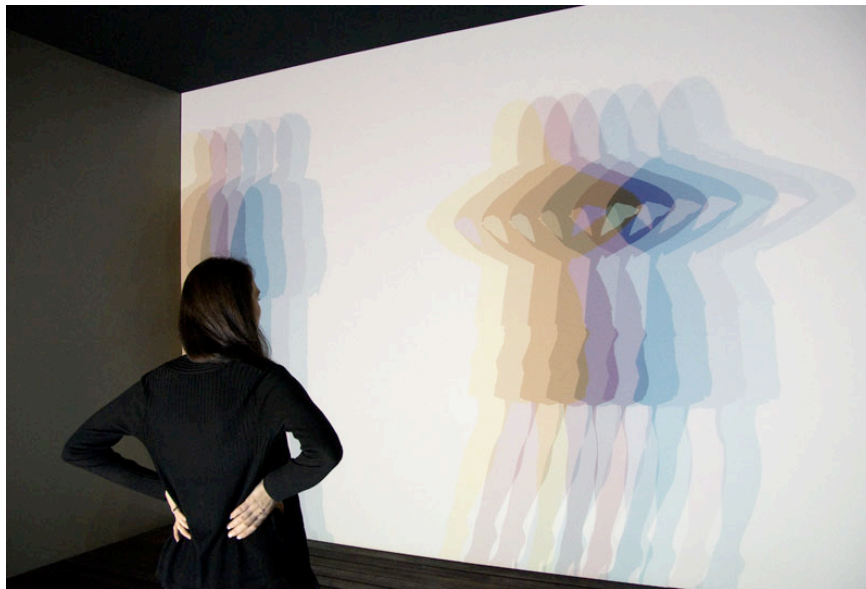
**Figure 8** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)*, 1991  
(ARTstor)



**Figure 7** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled*, 1990  
(ARTstor)



**Figure 9** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Golden)*, 1995  
(<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/about-us/guggenheim-images/show-full/piece/?search=Felix%20Gonzalez-Torres&page=1&f=Artist&cr=2>)



**Figure 10** Olafur Eliasson, *Multiple Shadow House*, 2010, installation view  
Tonya Bonakdar, NY  
(<http://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/exhibit.php>)



**Figure 11** Olafur Eliasson, *New York City Waterfalls*, 2008, NY  
([http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3163/2936006779\\_a34da9eedd\\_b.jpg](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3163/2936006779_a34da9eedd_b.jpg))



**Figure 12** Anish Kapoor, *Memory*, 2010, installation view at Deutsche Guggenheim  
(<http://assets2.artslant.com/work/image5/179395/qg7swq/kapoor490.jpg>)

## *Bibliography*

- Aitken, Doug. "1000 Words: Doug Aitken talks about *Electric Earth*." *ArtForum* (May 2000), [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0268/is\\_9\\_38/ai\\_65649374/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_9_38/ai_65649374/) (accessed 5 March 2010).
- Aitken, Doug, and Olafur Eliasson and Glenn D. Lowry. "The Spectacle of Contemporary Perception: Conversation with Doug Aitken, Olafur Eliasson and Glenn D. Lowry." MoMA Think Modern Lectures, Museum of Modern Art, New York: 27 November 2006, [http://www.moma.org/visit/podcasts/feed\\_thinkmodern.xml](http://www.moma.org/visit/podcasts/feed_thinkmodern.xml) (accessed 6 April 2010).
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
- Barthes, Roland. "From Work to Text." *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy J. Hale. Malden: MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Barthes, Roland. "Pleasure of the Text." trans. Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Anish Kapoor: Making Emptiness." *Anish Kapoor: Writings* <http://www.anishkapoor.com/writing/homibhabha.htm> (accessed 7 April, 2010).
- Bishop, Claire, ed. *Installation Art*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

- Bois, Yve-Alain, Benjamin h. d. Buchloh, Hal Foster, and Rosalind Krauss. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. "Relational Aesthetics." *Documents of Contemporary Art: Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
- Burn, Gordon, and Damien Hirst. *On the Way to Work*. New York: UNIVERSE PUBLISHING, 2002.
- Cotter, Holland. "Stand Still; A Spectacle Will Happen." *The New York Times* (18 April 2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/arts/design/18elia.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/arts/design/18elia.html?_r=1) (accessed 15 April 2010).
- Dantas, Marcello "A Conversation between curator Marcelo Dantas and Anish Kapoor." *Anish Kapoor: Writing*. <http://www.anishkapoor.com/writing/brazilinterview.htm> (accessed 7 April 2010).
- Debord, Guy-Ernest. *Society of the Spectacle* (1967). trans. Black & Red, 1977, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm> (accessed 5 April 2010).
- De Oliveira, Nicolas, Nicola Oxley, and Michael Petry. *Installation Art in the New Millenium: The Empire of the Senses*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2003.
- Elkins, James. *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Foster, Hal. "Chat Rooms." *Participation*, Claire Bishop, ed, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.



Fricke, Harald. "Magician of Quietude." (2004)

[http://www.atisma.com/spiritart/Byars\\_Fricke.htm](http://www.atisma.com/spiritart/Byars_Fricke.htm) (accessed 20 April 2010).

Garoian, Charles R., and Yvonne M. Gaudelius. "The Spectacle of Visual Culture."

*Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2004,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1321066> (accessed 1 April 2010).

Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties." *The John Power*

*Lecture in Contemporary Art*, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia: 17 May

1968, <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/avantgarde.html> (accessed 17 April

2010).

Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." *Partisan Review* (1939),

<http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/kitsch.html> (accessed 21 November 2009).

Haldane, John. "Review of Anish Kapoor: London." *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 140, No.

1144 (1998) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/887965> (accessed 6 April 2010).

Johnson, Ken. "Inside, Outside, All Around the Thing." *New York Times* (22 October

2009), <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/arts/design/23kapoor.html> (accessed

25 April, 2010).

Keller, Alexandra, and Frazer Ward. "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-

Avant-Garde Blockbuster." *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2006),

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877760> (accessed 7 March 2010).

Kotz, Liz. "The Space Between Screens." in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*.

eds. Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Krauss, Rosalind E. "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." *The Originality of the Avant-*

*garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.



Krauss, Rosalind E. "Notes on the Index: Part 1." *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Krauss, Rosalind E. "Notes on the Index: Part 2." *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Larsen, Caleb. "Caleb Larsen: A Tool to Deceive and Slaughter."

<http://www.caleblarsen.com/projects/a-tool-to-deceive-and-slaughter/#3> (accessed 20 April 2010).

McEvilley, Thomas . *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*. New York: Allworth Press, 1999.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. s.v. "Spectacle." Def. 1. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spectacle> (accessed 30 March 2010).

Meyer, James. "NO MORE SCALE: The Experience of Size in Contemporary Sculpture." *ArtForum* (Summer 2004), <http://www.artforum.com/inprint/id=6960> (accessed 6 April 2010).

Public Art Fund. "The New York City Waterfalls Activity Guide." NY: Public Art Fund, 2008, [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Activity\\_Guide](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Activity_Guide) (accessed 15 April 2010).

Public Art Fund. "The New York City Waterfalls Brochure." NY: Public Art Fund, 2008, [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Brochure](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Brochure) (accessed 15 April 2010).

Public Art Fund. "The New York City Waterfalls Press Release." NY: Public Art Fund, 2008, [http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about\\_the\\_waterfalls/Press\\_Release](http://www.nycwaterfalls.org/#/about_the_waterfalls/Press_Release) (accessed 15 April 2010).

- Rollins, Tim. "Interview with Felix Gonzalez-Torres." *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*. ed. William S. Bartman, New York: A.R.T. Press, 1993.
- Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.
- Siedell, Daniel A. *God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Stallabrass, Julian. *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. London: Verso, 2006.
- Storr, Robert. "Felix-Gonzalez Torres: Etre un Espion." *Artpress* (1995), <http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2000/Torres/torres/storr.html> (accessed 5 April 2010).
- Steinle, Christa, and Peter Weibel. "Editorial." *Olafur Eliasson: Surroundings Surrounded, Essays on Space and Science*. ed. Peter Weibel, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2001.
- Thompson, Don. *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Tomkins, Calvin. *The Lives of the Artists*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008.
- Vogel, Carol. "Bull Market for Hirst in Sotheby's 2-Day Sale." *New York Times* (16 September 2008), <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/17/arts/design/17auct.html?scp=3&sq=damien%20hirst%20sotheby%27s&st=cse> (accessed 20 April 2010).